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ABSTRACT

Wisconsin state library, school library, and public school agencies advise against the consolidation of school and public libraries as a response to budget pressures. Adult library use generally declines under such arrangements. Inequity of support for various geographical areas could result. In addition, legal questions concerning the use of school collections by nonpublic school students have not been resolved. Experience in Wisconsin and literature reports do not show that such consolidations save money. In determining their policy position, the agencies considered a list of questions concerning facilities, staffing, decision-making authority, financing, collection, and administration which might indicate the feasibility of consolidation. Single paragraph descriptions of the three existing Wisconsin consolidated libraries and an 18-reference bibliography are appended. (KB)

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School-Public Library Services Within A Community

Problems & Questions on Consolidation

A Policy Statement

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

On March 16, 1976, the Wisconsin Council on Library Development approved this statement of policy. The Council of Department Administrators of the Department of Public Instruction gave its endorsement on April 12, 1976, making this official department policy.

Additional copies of this bulletin can be obtained free of charge from: Publication Sales, Department of Public Instruction, 126 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53702.

Consultant assistance is available from either the Bureau of Public and Cooperative Library Services, 3030 Darbo Drive, Box 1437, Madison, Wisconsin 53701 (608) 266-7270; or from the Bureau of School Library Media Programs, 126 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53702 (608) 266-1965.

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Bulletin No. 6539

With increased emphasis on cooperation, resource sharing and improving local school and public library services and with extreme budget pressures, many requests have been received by the Bureau of Public and Cooperative Library Services and the Bureau of School Library Media Programs (Division for Library Services, Department of Public Instruction) for information on combining the school and the public library facilities. The Bureaus have developed this position paper to help communities which are contemplating consolidation of the school and the public libraries.

The Division for Library Services has investigated combined school-public library relationship and the history of these relationships in Wisconsin. Combining the two facilities is not recommended.* It has been shown in surveys (see bibliography) that no matter how carefully a facility is planned, adult library use drops off.

There are several reasons why combining is not recommended as a final solution to inadequate library service. If the boundaries of the two service areas are different, i.e., school district boundaries and municipal boundaries, there would be possible inequity of support of the combined facility. Legal questions concerning use of the total joint collection by nonpublic school students have not yet been resolved.

The responsibilities of school and public libraries are different (see Public Library and School Library Organizational Relationships and Inter-library Cooperation - A Policy Statement). However, with little relief seen in municipal budget problems, the possibility of combining types of services within a community is being explored more frequently. In smaller communities where the possibility seems most realistic, hidden costs of combining facilities can often be overlooked. Persons involved in planning often seek ways to avoid costly duplication and to combine services to provide expanded services. Past experience does not show that combining facilities regularly saves money or provides library service which meets state standards for either group of patrons. However, if after considering all alternatives, the libraries are consolidated, the consolidation should be seen as a temporary solution rather than the final solution to providing adequate library services to the community.

The following questions were considered by the Bureaus in determining this policy. The six main areas include: the physical facility, staff, decision-making authority, financing, collection and administration.

1. The Physical Facility in which the combined service would be housed:

    a. Is there an outside entrance so that the public would not have to walk through corridors or totally school-related areas to get to the library?

        1. Consideration should be given about whether to select an elementary or secondary school setting.

* The Division for Library Services--Department of Public Instruction supports the concept of community education and encourages cooperation and coordination among agencies. However, it is not necessary to have all educational units located in the same building. The community education concept endorses cooperation between all library agencies and educational units within a community and views libraries as a focus for informational resources and services to all residents.

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2. Consideration should be given to the location of the school within the community and its location relative to the downtown area.

b. Is the facility large enough to provide separate areas for the following functions?

1. Is there an area provided for quiet reading, an area for preschool children where they do not bother either adults or school children, and an area for school programs?

2. Is there a meeting room which could be scheduled for community use to provide programming for the library's public?

3. Does an area for school use on research projects or class projects exist?

4. Is there an area where controversial adult materials would not be accessible to minors and yet would remain openly accessible to the public?

c. Is the building designed to accommodate elderly or handicapped persons?

1. Are there many steps to the entrance of the building?

2. Are all entrances and exits at ground level?

3. Is close public parking available to the entrance?

4. Are the washrooms equipped for the handicapped?

d. Are there public restroom facilities available?

e. Can the library facility, including the restrooms, be operated during the evening, summer and weekend hours without jeopardizing building security?

2. Staff of the Library

a. Would one professional person direct both the school and public library program?

1. How would adult programming be carried out?

2. Would a preschool story hour be regularly scheduled?

3. How would library orientation for school children be provided?

b. Would an aide be available to supervise activities in the absence of the professional librarian?

c. If there is a certified school librarian and a certified public librarian, what would their duties be?

   1. Would one of the librarians be designated as the school librarian and the other designated as the public librarian?

   2. What differences in position descriptions would be necessary?

   3. Who would be designated as the decision maker?

   4. Would the salaries be equitable?

d. To whom would the librarian(s) be responsible?

e. Does the professional staff meet appropriate certification regulations established by the state?

   1. Is the person in the school librarian position certified by the Department of Public Instruction?

   2. Is the person in the public librarian position certified by the Division for Library Services?

f. Has the individual(s) had both school and public library experience and/or course work?

g. Is the professional librarian committed to the philosophy of a joint school-public library program?

3. Decision-Making Authority - School libraries are regulated by school board policy; public libraries are regulated by legal library boards under Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 43. (School district boards have no legal authority to operate public libraries.)

   a. Which board (school or public) would make decisions, particularly in areas of conflict?

   b. Which board would establish operating policies?

      1. Would there be two sets of policies?

      2. Would there be a joint set of policies approved by each board?

   c. What definite arrangements would be made for both boards to meet together on mutual programs and concerns?

   d. Which board would be responsible for hiring, evaluating and dismissing of the library staff?

4. Financing of the Joint Facility

   a. Which board would pay for what materials and services?

b. Would a formula be established for determining costs for materials and services to be paid by each board?

c. Which board would assume responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the building or how would it be shared?

d. Which board would be responsible for setting staff salaries and benefits?

   1. Which board would pay the staff?

   2. How would salary costs be divided or prorated?

e. Which board would provide for the following: capital improvements, equipment, supplies, mailing, printing, telephone and insurance?

f. Would bookkeeping be done jointly or separately?

5. Collection Development

a. Is the existing material collection well balanced enough to support both school and public library use?

   1. Would preschool materials be included?

   2. Would adult recreational materials be included?

   3. Would curriculum support materials be included?

b. Would a joint selection policy be adopted or would each library purchase materials under its own selection policy?

c. Does the selection policy have a part which deals with selection of controversial adult materials?

d. Would the selection policies provide for duplication of high-use materials?

6. Administration

a. Would the check-out desk be centrally located for use by all patrons?

b. Would the card catalog be combined or separate?

c. Are circulation procedures uniform?

d. Would the combined program meet both current qualitative and quantitative school library media and public library standards?

e. What provisions would be made for legal and equitable division of the materials and equipment if the libraries were separated again at a later date?

FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF REMAINING COMBINED SCHOOL-PUBLIC LIBRARY PROGRAMS IN WISCONSIN

Laona

A combined school/public library is located in the small northeastern Wisconsin lumbering town of Laona. The library is in the Laona High School, a circa 1930 building. A combined library program has existed in the community since the early 1900's. The library is divided into two rooms, a main room and a stack room. The main room is about the size of an average classroom and is the reading room, reference room and children's room. The stack room contains the adult and part of the high school collection. The library is conveniently located in the heart of the Laona business district. The library is not open evenings or weekends; however, it does operate during the summer. The program is directed by two librarians, a school librarian and a public librarian.

Bloomer

A combined school/public library is located in the northwestern Wisconsin community of Bloomer, a small community north of Eau Claire. The library is in the Bloomer Junior High School in an early 1900's building with 26 steps to the entrance. The room is divided into two rooms, a main room the size of a classroom and the adult collection room. The main room is small, and is often used for a study hall, thus allowing for limited use of the facility by the public. Because of the limited size of the facility, the school still maintains classroom book collections.

A fine program of library activities are presented by the librarian who is certified as both a school and a public librarian. The program includes not only the usual school activities, but also a preschool story hour and mothers program during the school day. The costs of the program are shared almost equally by the public library board and the school board. The two boards cooperate on policy and precedural matters.

Kohler

A combined school/public library is located in the Kohler Senior High School building. Kohler is an industrial community outside of Sheboygan. The combined school/public library area was specifically designed for this use in 1965; previous to this, the combined library was located in an older school. One large, spacious room is used as the combined library. Adult and school materials are intershelved for easy access to all users. Elementary and preschool materials are located in an adjacent elementary school building and are available for public use on two evenings a week and for limited summer hours. The librarian is certified as a school librarian and is eligible for certification as a public librarian. No specific public library program such as preschool or adult programs are available. The majority of the operating budget is supplied by the school with little municipal support. Community promotion of the public library is not evident at this time.

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